

On September 18, I sat in the Rosemead, Calif., "Church of Christ—Christian" meeting house and listened to Carl Ketcherside speak on the subject: "How Did We Get This Way?" Many gospel preachers who were present would agree with me that we witnessed the labor pains of a new religious sect being born among us. The creed is being written from St. Louis, Mo., and the formulas and plans are slowly and artfully being created. This sect has been in the process of formation for two or three years and from a seeming unguarded statement of its father, Bro. Ketcherside, ten years will be needed to call the sheep from the hills of confusion. A group of "young brethren in the west" contemplate the publication of a journal to be called the *Truth Seeker*. The party and its organs are being formed.

The chief spokesman for this movement is Bro. Carl Ketcherside, who, according to his own confession, once walked the road of rank sectarianism and sectionalism, but now professes to travel the way of love for all and fellowship for any error. Bro. Ketcherside is a good speaker and a pleasing personality but he does much better when he does not have some one to expose his theories. This he does not intend to permit. He says: "We are here not to settle anything but to discuss." Yet, the discussion must be limited to his terms.

Bro. Carl, whom I have known for thirty years and loved for all this time, refuses to be tagged. He is at home with the "Christ—Christian" group, the "Disciples Group" or just any one who will let him come in. He uses the most sectarian methods to advance his new doctrine. He ridicules the "church of Christ," "the non-instrument group" and makes accusations of division, splinters, ignorance, pride and decay. He is adept at humorous sarcasm and more than a dozen times he brought his audience to great laughter as he ridiculed the "non-instrument" brethren. In the next breath he would piously proclaim great affection for "all" brethren. NOT once did he criticize the "instrument brethren." Once he made a sly remark about the "Big D"—the Disciples Church. This brought an understanding smile from the "church of Christ—Christian Church" group.

This sect that is slowly emerging and perhaps in ten years will be delivered, is being built upon a broad and liberal interpretation of the New Testament. Carl uses, almost exclusively, the "Schonfield Authentic Version" of the New Testament. He then follows with his own interpretations and commentary. His interpretation of many texts, Amos 3:3 as an example, is at variance with many of the best and most capable scholars of the past and present. He would pride himself in this position. In a private conversation he told me that he would not make anything a test of fellowship that is not in the "gospels." He insists that no "gospel" was revealed after Pentecost. Even though the Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into "ALL TRUTH," Carl would give great liberty in the interpretation of the epistles. This new creed will bar no one from fellowship if such a one is a "baptized believer." He was asked what he would do with a "Mormon baptized believer" with his spiritual gifts and new revelations. He refused to comment upon this question. Carl says: "If we are in fellowship on Sunday and some one puts an instrument in on Wednesday, how does that break the fellowship?" We urged him to tell us if "we are in fellowship on Sunday and some of the brethren put in the stations of the Cross and Incense on Wednesday, would that break the fellowship?" To this he gave a knowing smile but he did not reveal what he would do with the incense pot nor did he tell why the question was so "funny."

This creed being defined will have a broad tolerance for every one. We are not to disfellowship any one for "doctrinal error" and he insists that because the "term withdraw fellowship is not in the Bible," that the idea is not there. He ignores 1 Tim. 4:1-4, where Paul condemns those who hold doctrinal error. He wants us to love and fellowship such people. He argues that 2 Thess. 3:6 had an application to the indolent

and lazy members of the church at Thessalonica only and that the verse does not apply to doctrinal differences. He also ignores chapter two of the Second Thessalonian letter, where “brethren” are exhorted to watch for the “brethren” who would lead into the development of doctrinal error such as “the man of sin,” “the mystery of lawlessness” and the “working of Satan.” Goodspeed’s translation, which is nearly as perfect as Carl’s, says: “so that all who have refused the TRUTH but have preferred disobedience may be condemned.” Paul told Christians to look for “brethren” who advocate such ideas as the “man of sin.” Carl says “love them as brethren but never break fellowship with them.” This new doctrine is so broad that it will eventually and essentially in every way, accept as Christians those of any and all denominations.

An audience of about three hundred were present the night I heard Carl, and it was predominantly a “church of Christ Christian” group. A few gospel preachers participated in the program. The instrument was not used, but it was not left off because of conviction but was a concession and compromise. I cannot judge the motives of those who participated in the meeting. I myself had a small part— by request— not by invitation. I can participate in such meetings exactly as I would participate in the Pope’s Unity meeting in Rome. I will attend such meetings as an interested observer or as a spokesman for my conviction. I would refuse any participation that might leave the feeling of endorsement for this fad.

This movement is not all new. We have only new faces and some new interpretations. Bro. Ketcherside has always been the center of a divisive movement and he is still in the spotlight. His far to the left sect and hobby almost died under his leadership. Bro. Carl now proposes to lead us all out of confusion. I do not judge his motives, I only know his fruits. It is evident that he thinks he is another “Campbell.” Much of his preaching is to read and explain Campbell to his congregation. This new appeal is interesting to many among us. We have many who do not know Truth. They have been baptized but not converted. They feel that we are a “sister denomination” and that we should seek and find a more brotherly relationship to our denominational friends. They are violently opposed to “negative” preaching. To such, this new sect will be a welcome relief. Some have already formed congregations along this line. One or two in this state have even adopted the plan of the instrument for part time only. They are “half and half.” This movement is destined to crystallize into a new sect— a liberal church of Christ.

The creed advocates tolerance, fellowship, brotherhood, compromise, amalgamation and finally a loose federation with “Christians of all denominations.” It is presently being called the “fellowship of the concerned,” a term that appears often in Bro. Carl’s paper. Carl admits by this slogan, that he will reject the “unconcerned.” He is therefore not in fellowship with all his brethren— some are not concerned with his new hobby. The movement is an agreement to disagree; it calls for a cease fire, as if that would guarantee peace; it mistakes kindly emotions and love for unity and loudly says that union and diversity of beliefs will mean strength if we will but be tolerant. A Presbyterian preacher could not have written a better creed.

The west, and in particular, Southern California, has suffered much in the past under the impact of this type of sectarianism. After Ralph Wilbourn was removed from a position of trust and Ernest Beam finally separated himself from us, the march of liberalism was halted. Are we again to see the doctrine of these past reformers come into our midst to divide, disturb and stunt the growth of churches? Are we again to witness an exodus of many into the more favorable climate of denominationalism? We will see this and soon if men of influence and ability do not arise to defend the Truth and expose this sectarianism for what it is.

This ‘62 model of the same old denominationalism of a few years ago will not object to an instrument in the worship. It has no objection to “union meetings,” “easter services,” “baby dedications,” “the Lord’s Supper on any day,” or any and all of the doctrinal errors that have plagued the Christian Church for years. This sect is the greatest threat to the peace and unity of nearly two million Christians than anything that has faced us in many years. “We” are ready for it. The soil has been prepared by an apologetic pulpit, by unlearned elders and trembling job hunting preachers. This is a “different gospel” and as Paul would

say, a “perverted gospel” (Gal. 1:6-9). Or, has Bro. Carl found a new translation that fails to mention the “gospel” in this text?

This is a time for us to love one another and we must, to use Carl’s illustration, love the afflicted brother, but we must TREAT the afflicted brother. Love our brother, but love TRUTH even more than our brother. “This is My commandment that ye love one another .... ye are my FRIENDS if ye DO THE THINGS which I command you.” In this plan is the only true base for unity.